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SACRED PROSTITUTION

Sacred Prostitution
&
Marriage by Capture

by G. S. WAKE

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CONTENTS

Sacred Prostitution 19
Marriage by Capture 43
Marriage Among
Primitive Peoples 61
Origin of Serpent Worship 83

Sacred Prostitution

Mr. Darwin, in his work entitled "The Descent of Man" (vol. ii., p. 361), seems to endorse the opinion that the high honour bestowed in ancient times on women who were utterly licentious is intelligible only "if we admit that promiscuous intercourse was the aboriginal and therefore the long revered custom of the tribe," and I propose, in the present chapter, to show that the fact referred to has nothing at all to do with the custom sought to be supported by it.

The examples on which Sir John Lubbock relies have been taken from Dulaure's work on ancient religions, but they are more fully detailed in the "Historie de la Prostitution" by M. Pierre Dufour, and they certainly form one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of morals.

According to Herodotus, every woman born in Babylonia was obliged by law, once in her life, to submit to the embrace of a stranger. Those who were gifted with beauty of face or figure soon completed this offering to Venus, but of the others some had to remain in the sacred enclosure for several years before they were able to obey the law. This statement of Herodotus is confirmed by the evidence of Strabo, who says the custom dated from the foundation of the city of Babylon.

The compulsory prostitution of Babylonia was connected with the worship of Mylitta, and wherever this worship spread it was accompanied by the sexual sacrifice. Starbo relates that in Armenia the sons and daughters of the leading families were consecrated to the service of Anaïtis for a longer or shorter period. Their duty was to entertain strangers, and those females who had received the greatest number were on their return home the most sought after in marriage. The Phœnician worship of Astarté was no less distinguished by sacred prostitution, to which was added a promiscuous intercourse between the sexes during certain religious fêtes, at which the men and women exchanged their garments. The Phœnicians carried the custom to the Isle of Cyprus, where the

worship of their great goddess, under the name of Venus, became supreme.

According to a popular legend the women of Amathonte, afterwards noted for its temple, were originally known for their chastity. When, therefore, Venus was cast by the waves naked on their shores, they treated her with disdain, and as a punishment they were commanded to prostitute themselves to all comers, a command which they obeyed with so much reluctance that the goddess changed them into stone. With their worship of Astarté or Venus, the Phœnicians introduced sacred prostitution into all their Colonies. St. Augustine says that, at Carthage, there were three Venuses rather than one: one of the virgins, another of the married women, and a third of the courtesans, to the last of whom it was that the Phœnicians sacrificed the chastity of their daughters before they were married. It was the same in Syria. At Byblos during the fêtes of Adonis, after the ceremony which announced the resurrection of the God, every female worshipper had to sacrifice to Venus either her hair or her person. Those who preferred to preserve the former adjourned to the sacred enclosures, where they remained for a whole day for the purpose of prostituting themselves.

The same curious custom appears to have been practised in Media and Persia, and among the Parthians. The Lydians were particularly noted for the zeal with which they practised the rites of Venus. They did not limit their observance to occasional attendance at the sacred fêtes, but, says Herodotus, they devoted themselves to the goddess, and practised, for their own benefit, the most shameless prostitution. It is related that a magnificent monument to Alyattes, the father of Crœsus, was built by the contributions of the merchants, the artisans, and the courtesans, and that the portion of the monument erected with the sum furnished by the courtesans much exceeded both the other parts built at the expense of the artisans and merchants.

Some writers deny that sacred prostitution was practised in Egypt, but the great similarity between the worship of Osiris and Isis and that of Venus and Adonis renders the contrary opinion highly probable. On their way to the fêtes of Isis at Bubastis the female pilgrims executed indecent dances when the vessels passed the villages on the banks of the river. "These obscenities," says Dufour, "were only such as were about to happen at the temple, which was visited each year by seven hundred thousand pilgrims,

who gave themselves up to incredible excesses." Strabo asserts that a class of persons called *pellices* (harlots) were dedicated to the service of the patron deity of Thebes, and that they "were permitted to cohabit with anyone they chose." It is true that Sir Gardner Wilkinson treats this account as absurd, on the ground that the women, many of whom were the wives and daughters of the noblest families, assisted in the most important ceremonies of the temple. This fact is, however, quite consistent with Strabo's statement, which may have referred to an inferior class of female servitors, and considering the customs of allied peoples, it is more likely to be true than the reverse. The testimony of Herodotus is certainly opposed to that of Strabo. But the former acknowledges that he did not reveal all that he knew of the secrets of Egyptian worship, and we must, therefore, receive with some hesitation his assertion that "the Egyptians are the first who, from a religious motive, have forbidden commerce with women in the sacred places, or even entrance there after having known them, without being first cleansed." The Greek historian adds—"Almost all other peoples, except the Egyptians and the Greeks, have commerce with women in the sacred places; or, when they rise from them, they enter there

without being washed." Whatever may be the truth as to the inhabitants of ancient Egypt, at the present day the dancing girls of that country, who are also prostitutes, attend the religious festivals just as the ancient devotees of Astarté are said to have done.

If we test the value of Herodotus' evidence on the matter in question by what is known of Grecian customs, it will have little weight. Sacred prostitution at Athens was under the patronage of Venus Pandemos, who is said to have been the first divinity that Theseus caused the people to adore, or, at least, to whom a statue was erected on the public place. The fêtes of that goddess were celebrated on the fourth day of each month, a chief part in them being assigned to the prostitutes, who then exercised their calling only for the profit of the goddess, and they expended in offerings the money which they had gained under her auspices. At the height of its prosperity the temple of Venus at Corinth had, according to Strabo, one thousand courtesans. It was a common custom in Greece to conscrate to Venus a certain number of young girls, when it was desired to render the goddess favourable, or when she had granted the prayers addressed to her.

The ordinary Athenian prostitutes appear to have

been dedicated to the public service, and they were forbidden to leave the country without the consent of the Archons, who often accorded it only on having a guarantee that they would return. There would seem even to have been a College of Prostitutes, which was declared useful and necessary to the state. The story of the social influence of the *heterœ* during the palmiest days of Greece is too well known to need repetition, and it will be found fully detailed in the pages of Dufour. The majority of the *heterœ,* however, were far from being in the position of Aspasia, Laïs, and others, who were the friends, and even instructors, of statesmen and philosophers. Although they were allowed some of the rights of citizenship, they were often treated with implacable rigour by the Areopagus, and their children were condemned to the same ignominy as themselves. Curiously enough, the chief accusation against prostitutes was their irreligion, and although they were priestesses in some temples, from others they were rigidly excluded.

Among the Romans the prostitute class held a much lower position in public opinion that with the Greeks, and for a long time its members were treated as below the attention of legislators, and were left to the arbitrary regulation of the police. They were

classed with the slave population as civilly dead, and, having once become "infamous," the moral stain was indelible. Dufour says, as to the religious character of Latin prostitution—"The courtesans at Rome were not, as in Greece, kept at a distance from the altars. On the contrary, they frequented all the temples, in order, no doubt, to find their favourable chances of gain; they showed their gratitude to the divinity who had been propitious to them, and they brought to his sanctuary a portion of the gain which they believed they owed to him. Religion closed its eyes to this impure source of revenue and offerings; civil legislation did not intermeddle with these details of false devotion, which concerned only religion; and, thanks to that tolerance, or rather the systematic abstention from judicial and religious control, sacred prostitution preserved at Rome nearly its primitive features, with this difference, nevertheless, that it was always confined to the class of courtesans, and that, instead of being an integral part of worship, it was a foreign accessory to it." According to some Roman writers, however, Acca Laurentia (the foster-mother of Romulus and Remus), in whose honour the Lupercales were instituted, was a prostitute, and the fêtes of Flora had a similar origin. The goddess of flowers was

originally a courtesan, who made an enormous fortune, which she left to the state. Her legacy was accepted, and the Senate, in gratitude, decreed that the name of Flora should be inscribed in the fastes of the state, and that solemn fêtes should perpetuate the memory of her generosity. These fêtes always preserved a remembrance of their origin, and were accompanied by the most scandalous scenes, which were publicly enacted in the circus.

The religious prostitutes of antiquity find their counterparts in the dancing girls attached to the Hindoo temples. These "female slaves of the idol" are girls who have been dedicated to the temple service, often by their own parents, and they act both as dancing girls and courtesans. Notwithstanding their calling, they are treated with great respect, and such would seem always to have been the case, if we may judge by the ancient legend which relates that Gautama was entertained at Vesali by a lady of high rank who had the title of "Chief of the Courtesans." No doubt the attention paid to the appearance and education of the temple prostitutes has much to do with the respect with which they are treated, the position accorded by the ancient Greeks to the superior class of *heterœ* being due to an analogous cause.

Bishop Heber says, in relation to the Bayadêres of Southern India, that they differ considerably from the Nautch girls of the Northern Provinces, "being all in the service of different temples, for which they are purchased young, and brought up with a degree of care which is seldom bestowed on the females of India of any other class. This care not only extends to dancing and singing, and the other allurements of their miserable profession, but to reading and writing. Their dress is lighter than the bundle of red cloth which swaddles the *figuranté* of Hindostan, and their dancing is more indecent; but their general appearance and manner seemed to me far from immodest, and their air even more respectable than the generality of the lower classes of India. . . . The money which they acquire in the practice of their profession is hallowed to their wicked gods, whose ministers are said to turn them out without remorse, or with a very scanty provision, when age or sickness renders them unfit for their occupation. Most of them, however, die young." The Bishop adds, "I had heard that the Bayadêres were regarded with respect among the other classes of Hindoos, as servants of the gods, and that, after a few years' service, they often marry respectably. But, though I made several inquiries, I

cannot find that this is the case; their name is a common term of reproach among the women of the country, nor could any man of decent caste marry one of their number." The courtesans of Hindostan do not appear to be attached to the temples, but Tavernier relates that they made offerings to certain idols, to whom they surrendered themselves when young to bring good fortune.

The chief facts connected with religious prostitution have now been given, and it remains only to show that this system has nothing to do with any custom of communal marriage, or promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, such as it is thought to give evidence of. Sir John Lubbock says that the life led by the courtesans attached to the Hindoo temples is not considered shameful, because they continue the old custom of the country under religious sanction. This statement, however, is wholly inaccurate, as the former existence of the custom referred to cannot be established. The social phenomena which are thought to establish that mankind has passed through a stage of promiscuity in the intercourse between the sexes are capable of totally different interpretation. The ease with which any doctrine or practice, however absurd or monstrous, will be accepted, if it possesses

a religious sanction, would alone account for the respect entertained for religious prostitutes. But among a people who, like the Hindoos, view sexual immorality for personal gain with abhorrence, such a calling, if it were based on so barbarous a custom as communal marriage, would inevitably lessen rather than increase that sentiment. On the other hand, if the religious position accorded to the temple prostitutes is connected with ideas which have a sacredness of their own, the respect will be greatly increased. And thus, in fact, it is. Probably no custom is more widely spread than the providing for a guest a female companion, who is usually a wife or daughter of the host. Such a connection with a stranger is permitted even among peoples who are otherwise jealous preservers of female chastity. This custom of sexual hospitality is said to have been practised by the Babylonians in the time of Alexander, although, according to the Roman historian, parents and husbands did not decline to accept money in return for the favours thus accorded. Eusebius asserts that the Phœnicians prostituted their daughters to strangers, and that this was done for the greater glory of hospitality. So, also, we find that at Cyprus the women who devoted themselves to the good goddess walked about the shores of

the island to attract the strangers who disembarked.

In the earliest phase of what is called sacred prostitution it was not every man who was entitled to enjoy its privileges. The Babylonian women, who were compelled to make a sacrifice of their persons once in their lives, submitted to the embraces only of strangers. In Armenia, also, strangers alone were entitled to seek sexual hospitality in the sacred enclosures at the temple of Anaïtis, and it was the same in Syria during the fêtes of Venus and Adonis. Dufour was struck by this fact, and, speaking of it, he says, "It may be thought surprising that the inhabitants of the country were so impressed with a worship in which their women had all the benefit of the mysteries of Venus." He adds, however, that the former were not less interested than the latter in these mysteries. "The worship of Venus was in some sort stationary for the women, nomadic for the men, seeing that these could visit in turn the different fêtes and temples of the goddess, profiting everywhere, in these sensual pilgrimages, by the advantages reserved to guests and to strangers."

Besides hospitality, the practice of which is, under ordinary circumstances, an almost sacred duty with uncultured peoples, there was another series of ideas

associated with the system of sacred prostitution. In the East, the great aim of woman's life is marriage and bearing children. We have a curious reference to this fact in the lament of the Hebrew women for Jephthah's daughter, which appears to have been occasioned less by her death than by the recorded fact that "she knew no man." When she heard of the vow made by her father, she said to him, "Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows." The desire of the wife, however, is not merely for children, but for a man-child, the necessity for which has given rise to the practice of adoption; another custom which Sir John Lubbock believes to support his favourite doctrine of communal marriage. In India adoption is practised when a man has no son of his own, and it has a directly religious motive. Sir Thomas Strange shows that the Hndoo law of inheritance cannot be understood without reference to the belief that a man's future happiness depends "upon the performance of his obsequies and the payment of his [spiritual] debts." He who pays these debts is his heir; and, as "offerings from sons are more effectual than offerings from other persons, sons are first in order of succession." Hence to have a son is to the

Hindoo a sacred duty, and when his wife bears no children, or only daughters, he is compelled by his religious belief to adopt one. We can understand how anxious for a son women must be where those ideas prevail, and this anxiety has given rise to various curious ceremonies having for their object to prevent or cure sterility. Some of these, which have been described by Dulaure and other writers, existed in Europe down to a comparatively recent period. In India, and probably in some other Eastern countries, they are still practised both by wives who have continued childless and by newly-married women, the latter offering to the *Linga* the sacrifice of their virginity.

This desire for children led to offerings being made to ensure the coveted blessing, and to vows to be performed on its being obtained. The nature of the vow would undoubtedly have some reference to the thing desired; and, as related by an old Arabian traveller in India, "when a woman has made a vow for the purpose of having children, if she brings into the world a pretty daughter, she carries it to *Bod* (so they call the idol which they adore), and leaves it with him." The craving for children was anciently as strong among Eastern peoples as it is at the present day, and it is much more probable that this, rather

than a habit of licentiousness, either of the women themselves or of the priests, led to the sacrifice at the shrine of Mylitta. If we are to believe Herodotus, the Babylonian women were in his time noted for their virtue, although at a later period they would seem to have lost that characteristic.

The desire for children is directly opposed to the feeling which would operate in the case of communal marriage, where parents and children, having no special relation, no one would have any particular interest in preserving the issue of such intercourse. Among the uncultured peoples of the present era who the most nearly approach in their sexual relations to a state of communal marriage, the indifference to children is often apparent. Infanticide is very general, and abortion is often practised by the women to enable them to retain the favour of their husbands. The sacred prostitution, which is intimately connected with the craving for children, must, therefore, have originated at a time when a considerable advance had been made in social culture.

It would not be surprising if the ancient Babylonish custom had, of itself, resulted in a system of sacred prostitution. The act of sexual intercourse was in the nature of an offering to the Goddess of Fecundity,

and a life of prostitution in the service of the goddess might well come to be viewed as pleasing to her and as deserving of respect at the hands of her worshippers. We have an analogous phase of thought in the Japanese notion, that a girl who enters the Yoshiwara for the purpose of thus supporting her parents performs a highly meritorious act. In Armenia, as we have seen, children were devoted by their parents to the service of the great goddess for a term of years, and those who had received the most numerous favours from strangers were the most eagerly sought after in marriage on the expiration of that period. That dedication was in pursuance of a vow, which no doubt like the vows of Indian women at the present day, would at first have relation to some sexual want, although thank-offerings of the same character would afterwards come to be presented by the worshippers of the goddess for blessings of any description. Thus Xenophon consecrated fifty courtesans to the Corinthian Venus, in pursuance of the vow which he had made when he besought the goddess to give him the victory in the Olympian games. Pindar makes Xenophon thus address these slaves of the goddess: "Oh, young damsels, who receive all strangers and give them hospitality, priestesses of the god-

dess Pitho in the rich Corinth, it is you who, in causing the incense to burn before the images of Venus and in invoking the mother of love, often merit for us her celestial aid, and procure for us the sweet moments which we taste on the luxurious couches where is gathered the delicate fruit of beauty."

The legitimate inference to be made from what has gone before is that sacred prostitution sprang from the primitive custom of providing sexual hospitality for strangers, the agents by which it was carried out being supplied by the votaries of the deity under whose sanction the custom was placed. Assuming its existence, and the strong desire on the part of married women for children, which led them to sacrifice their own virginity as an offering to the Goddess of Fecundity, or to dedicate their daughters to her service, we have a perfect explanation of the custom of sacred prostitution. The duty of these "servants of the idol" would include the furnishing of hospitality to the strangers who visited the shrines and fêtes of the deity. These pilgrims became the guests of the deity, and she was bound to furnish them with the same hospitality as that which they would have met with if they had been entertained by private individuals. The piety of her worshippers enabled her to do

this, either by devoting their daughters for a limited period to this sacred service, in return for which the reward of fecundity would be looked for, or by presenting them absolutely to the goddess in return for favours received at her hands. It is not surprising that among peoples having such notions, the temple courtesans were regarded with great respect, nor that those who had acted in that capacity with success were eagerly sought after as wives. It is more difficult to understand how sexual hospitality should have come to be placed under divine sanction. The difficulty vanishes, however, when the light in which the process of generation is viewed in the East is considered. That which by us is looked upon as due to a passionate impulse, was anciently (except among certain religious sects), and is still to the Eastern mind, an act of mysterious significance. The male organ of generation was the symbol of creative power, and the veneration in which it was held led to practices which to a modern European are nothing but disgusting, although to the Semite they partake of a purely religious character.

To pursue this subject further would be to enter upon the wide field of Phallic worship. Sufficient has, however, already been said to prove that sacred pros-

titution is only remotely connected, if at all, with communal marriage. The only apparent connection between them is the sexual hospitality to strangers which the former was established to supply; but the association is only apparent, as the providing of that hospitality is perfectly consistent with the recognition of the value of female chastity, and is quite independent of any ideas entertained as to marriage.

In conclusion, I may add that the opinion expressed by Sir John Lubbock, that the Grecian *hetœræ* were more highly esteemed than the married women, because the former were originally countrywomen and relations, and the latter captives and slaves, is not consistent with the facts of the case. Any one conversant with the social customs of ancient Greece will be able to give a totally different explanation of that phenomenon. Marriage with foreign women was forbidden, and thus captives and slaves furnished the Greeks with concubines and prostitutes, while their wives were taken from among their own countrywomen. Even such was the case in the earliest heroic ages, when, says Mr. Gladstone, the intercourse between husband and wife was "thoroughly natural, full of warmth, dignity, reciprocal deference, and substantial, if not conventional deli-

cacy." The same writer says: "The relations of youth and maiden generally are indicated with extreme beauty and tenderness in the Iliad; and those of the unmarried woman to a suitor, or probable spouse, are so portrayed, in the case of the incomparable Nausicaa, as to show a delicacy and freedom that no period of history or state of manners can surpass."

Marriage by Capture

VARIOUS attempts have been made to account for the prevalence among peoples of all degrees of culture of what has been called "marriage by capture," or of rites which furnish evidence of its former existence. Mr. M'Lellan traces it to infanticide, which by "rendering women scarce, led at once to polyandry within the tribe, and the capturing of women from without." On the other hand, Sir John Lubbock ascribes the origin of "marriage by capture" to a desire on the part of individuals to acquire women for themselves, "without infringing on the general rights of the tribe." According to this view, communal marriage was replaced by special connections, accompanied by the introduction of a foreign element, giving rise to the practice of *exogamy*. The reference to

this practice (the necessity for which must, if Mr. M'Lellan's idea is correct, have preceded "marriage by capture," instead of the latter originating it) unnecessarily complicates the question under discussion.

Although exogamy is often associated with forcible marriage, the two things are perfectly distinct, and they have had totally different origins. Mr. Morgan very justly connects the former with certain ideas entertained by primitive peoples with regard to blood relationship, and it can be explained most simply and rationally as *marriage out of the clan,* it having sprang from the belief that all the members of a clan are related by blood, and therefore incapable of being united in marriage. This view is confirmed by the fact that tribes which are *endogamous* in relation to other tribes are *exogamous* in the sense that they comprise several clans, the members of none of which can intermarry among themselves. We have a curious example of this limited exogamy in the Chinese, among whom persons bearing the same family name are not permitted to intermarry. True endogamy would seem to exist among very few peoples, and when it is practised the custom is probably due to special circumstances, which, giving prominence to a particular clan, have enabled them to claim a caste

privilege, or it may be owing to a necessity arising from the complete severance of the members of a clan from their fellows. The scarcity of women, whether occasioned by infanticide or polygamy, may have rendered exogamy more requisite, and it may have been complicated by forcible marriage, but none of these have any real bearing on its origin.

It could be shown without difficulty that the opinion entertained by the writers I have referred to, that the primitive condition of man was one of communal marriage, is untenable, and if I am correct in this conclusion, there will be no occasion to consider the argument that "marriage by capture" depended on such a social condition. The idea that "marriage by capture" originated in the necessity for exogamy, arising from infanticide or some other practice, is more plausible, and such an explanation of the custom may be accepted where it is not universal in a tribe, but resorted to only in particular cases or under special conditions. The capture of wives among the Australian aborigines is expressly accounted for by Oldfield as being due to the scarcity of women. But where forcible marriage can be traced to the action of individual caprice it must be treated as exceptional, and some other explanation must be sought for the

widespread prevalence of that custom. From this standpoint Mr. M'Lennan's explanation is far from satisfactory, as may be shown by analysis of the incidents attendant on "marriage by capture," as practised by different peoples.

It is true that sometimes the carrying off of the bride is resisted by her friends, and is attended in some cases, as among the Welsh down to a comparatively recent period, by a sham fight between them and the friends of the bridegroom; although among other peoples, as with the Khonds of India, the protection of the bride is left to her female companions. In the great majority of cases cited by Sir John Lubbock, however, the suitor forcibly removes the bride without any hindrance from her friends. Occasionally, as with the Tunguses, the New Zealanders, and the Mandingos, she strongly resists. Among other peoples, as with the Esquimaux, the resistance is usually only pretended, and is thus analogous to the sham fight already referred to. In all these cases alike, however, it is the girl only who has to be conquered, and if the resistance were real it would depend on herself whether or not she should be captured. There are other incidents of this forcible marriage which have more significance than has hitherto been at-

tached to them. Among the New Zealanders, if the girl who is being carried off can break away from her captor and regain her father's house, the suitor loses all chance of ever obtaining her in marriage. So, also, among the Fijians, if a woman does not approve of the man who has taken her by force to his house, she leaves him for some one who can protect her. Among the Fuegians the girl who is not willing to accept her would-be husband does not wait to be carried off, but hides herself in the woods, and remains concealed until he is tired of looking for her. According to Mongol custom, the bride hides herself with some of her relations, and the bridegroom has to search for and find her. Something like the Fuegian custom is practised by the Aitas, among whom the bride has to conceal herself in a wood, where the suitor must find her before sunset.

In these cases the will of the bride-elect is a very important element, and it is equally so in those cases where she is captured and carried off only after a prolonged chase. Thus, with the Kalmucks, according to Dr. Clarke, the girl gallops away at full speed, pursued by her suitor, and if she does not wish to marry him she always effects her escape. An analogous custom is found among the uncultured tribes of

the Malayan Peninsula. Here, however, the chase is on foot, and generally round a circle, although sometimes in the forest, and, as Bourien (quoted by Sir John Lubbock) says, the pursuer is successful only if he "has had the good fortune to please the intended bride." A similar custom is found among the Koraks of North Eastern Asia. Here the ceremony takes place within a large tent containing numerous separate compartments (*pologs*), arranged in a continuous circle around its inner circumference. Mr. Kennan (in his "Tent Life in Siberia") gives an amusing and instructive description of such a ceremony. The women of the encampment, armed with willow and alder rods, stationed themselves at the entrance of the pologs, the front curtains of which were thrown up. Then, at a given signal, "the bride darted suddenly into the first polog, and began a rapid flight around the tent, raising the curtains between the pologs successively, and passing under. The bridegroom instantly followed in hot pursuit, but the women who were stationed in each compartment threw every possible impediment in his way, tripping up his unwary feet, holding down the curtains to prevent his passage, and applying the willow and alder switches unmercifully to a very susceptible part of his body as he

stooped to raise them. . . . With undismayed perseverance he pressed on, stumbling headlong over the outstretched feet of his female persecutors, and getting constantly entangled in the ample folds of the reindeer-skin curtains, which were thrown with the skill of a matador over his head and eyes. In a moment the bride had entered the last closed polog near the door, while the unfortunate bridegroom was still struggling with his accumulated misfortunes about half way round the tent. I expected," says the traveller, "to see him relax his efforts and give up the contest when the bride disappeared, and was prepared to protest strongly on his behalf against the unfairness of the trial; but, to my surprise, he still struggled on, and with a final plunge, burst through the curtain of the last polog, and rejoined his bride," who had waited for him there. Mr. Kennan adds that "the intention of the whole ceremony was evidently to give the woman an opportunity to marry the man or not, as she chose, since it was obviously impossible for him to catch her under such circumstances, unless she voluntarily waited for him in one of the pologs."

Judging only from the element of force observable in what are termed "marriages by capture," the explanation of them given by Mr. M'Lennan appears

reasonable. But, although capture may be an incident of exogamy, the customs under consideration are really connected with endogamy, in the sense that the parties to them belong to a common tribe. Moreover, those customs are wanting in another of the elements which would be necessary to justify their being classed as "survivals" of an earlier practice of forcible exogamy. This pre-supposes the absence of consent on the part of the relatives of the bride, but the so-called marriage by capture is nearly always preceded by an arrangement with them. The only exception among the various examples of such marriages mentioned by Sir John Lubbock is that of the inhabitants of Bali, where the man is said to forcibly carry off his bride to the woods, and to *afterwards* effect reconciliation with her "enraged" friends. It is not improbable, however, that rage may be stimulated in this case as in others, and that the capture is arranged beforehand with them. Sir John Lubbock himself explains an apparent act of lawless violence among the Mandingos as an incident of "marriage by capture," on the ground that the bride's relatives "only laughed at the farce, and consoled her by saying that she would soon be reconciled to her situation;" and it appears that her mother had previously given her

consent to the proceeding. A mere general understanding, if universally recognised, would indeed be as efficacious as a special consent, and whether the consent of the parent has to be obtained previously to overcoming the opposition of the bride, or whether this has to be overcome as a condition precedent to the consent being given, is practically of no importance. We seem to have an example of the latter in the marriage customs of the Afghans as described by Elphinstone. Among this people wives are always purchased, and the necessity for paying the usual price is not done away with, although a man is allowed to make sure of his bride by cutting off a lock of her hair, snatching away her veil, or throwing a sheet over her, if he declares at the same time that she is his affianced wife.

The facts just mentioned lead to the conclusion that the "capture" which forms the most prominent incident in the marriage customs under discussion, has a totally different significance from that which is connected with exogamy in the sense supposed by Mr. M'Lennan and Sir John Lubbock. In the latter case force is resorted to to prevent the possibility of opposition by the tribe to whom the victim of the violence belongs; but in the former, as the consent of

the woman's relatives had already been given, expressly or by implication, the force must be to overcome the possible opposition of the woman herself, whether this may arise from bashfulness or from an actual dislike to the suitor. We have here an important distinction, and it points to a state of society where women have acquired a right to exercise a choice in the matter of marriage. Before this right could be fully established the suitor would be allowed to obtain her compliance by force, if necessary, as with the Greenlanders, among whom, according to Crantz, the bride, if, after she has been captured by the old women who negotiated the marriage, she cannot be persuaded by kind and courteous treatment, is "compelled by force, nay, sometimes by blows, to change her state." But even among the Greenlanders, if a girl had great repugnance to her suitor, she could escape marriage by betaking herself to the mountains. A still more efficacious plan is the cutting off of her hair, which frees her from all importunity, as it is accepted as a sure sign that she has determined never to marry. "Marriage by capture" has thus relation not to the tribe but to the individual immediately concerned, and it is based on her power to withhold her consent to the contract made between her suitor

and her relatives. Among some uncultured peoples the opposition of the bride-elect is effectually overcome by force, but it is seldom that she is not allowed the opportunity of escaping a marriage which she dislikes. When once it has become usual for the bride to show a real or simulated opposition to the proposed marriage, as might easily be the case among peoples who, although uncultured, esteem chastity before marriage, it would in course of time be firmly established as a general custom. Thus, when a Greenland young woman is asked in marriage she professes great bashfulness, tears her ringlets, and runs away. When the show of opposition had become a matter of etiquette, it would, notwithstanding that the marriage had been previously arranged, be joined in by the friends of the bride, who, by a fiction, is being carried off against her will. Hence the customs of having a sham fight before the bridegroom is allowed to gain possession of his prize, and the placing of impediments in the way of his catching her in the chase, neither of which has any relation to a supposed primitive practice of forcible abduction from a hostile tribe.

It will be said, however, if the relations of the bride have consented to her marriage, why do they oppose the carrying into effect of their agreement? Much

light is thrown on this point by the description given by Colonel Dalton of the customs of the hill-tribes of Bengal. With many of the aboriginal peoples of India, and with some Sudra castes, one of the most important ceremonies of marriage is the application of the *Sindur* to the forehead of the bride; this consists in the bridegroom making, usually with vermilion, a red mark between her eyes. In some places, however, particularly in Singhbum, among the Hos, the bridegroom and bride mark each other with blood, signifying that by marriage they become one. Colonel Dalton supposes this to be the origin of the *Sindrahan,* a custom which is as singular as it is widespread. With the Oraons, a Dravidian tribe, the same ceremony is practised, but in secret. A veil is cast over the bridal pair, who are then covered with another piece of stuff held by some of their male relations, while others mount guard, fully armed, as though to kill any one who might approach to interfere with the ceremony. In the Singhbum villages the ceremony is modified, and the engaged couple drink beer from the same vessel. This signifies that they form only one body, belong to the same *kili*—in other words, that the woman is admitted to the clan of her husband. Dr. Hunter, in his admirable work entitled

"Annals of Rural Bengal," says the great event of the life of a Santal is the union of his "tribe" with another "tribe" in marriage. No individual can marry a member of his own clan, and the woman in marrying abandons the clan of her father, as well as his gods, to adopt the clan and the gods of her husband. The ceremony by which the Santals express this separation is different from that adopted by the Hos. The husband's clansmen knot together the garments of the bridegroom and the bride, after which the women of the bride's clan bring lighted charcoal, crush it with a pestle to indicate the breaking of the old family tie, and then extinguish it with water to indicate the definite separation of the bride from her own clan. As we have seen, this separation is effected among the Oraons in the presence of the members of the two clans, and the sham combat by which the marriage ceremonies commence is evidently intended to show that it is indispensable to obtain the consent, not only of the bride, but also of the family group to which she belongs, before the ties which bind her to the clan can be broken. After offering a pretended resistance, the clansmen of the bride express their consent in joining the relations of the bridegroom to celebrate the formation of the fresh family tie.

At first sight, it might be thought that there is little difference between this explanation of "marriage by capture" and that given by Sir John Lubbock, but in reality they differ completely. Sir John Lubbock supposes a violent capture from another tribe without any reference to the question of clanship. On the other hand, in the explanation above proposed, there is a change in the position of the woman, but it is brought about by arrangement, the pretended combat having relation to the rights of the clan, but having no reference to the wider organisation of the tribe. The sham-fight is simply a phase of the ceremonies, destined to show the objection entertained by a family group to part with one of its members, and, what is of still greater importance, to give up the interest they possess in the future offspring of the woman who is to be cut off from the clan. The essentially pacific character of the sham-fight is shown by the manner in which, as described by Colonel Dalton, it is conducted in Gondwana. Among the Muasi of this district, when the cavalcade of the bridegroom approaches the house of the bride, there issues from it a merry troop of young girls, who are headed by the mother of the bride, bearing on her head a vessel full of water, surmounted by a lighted lamp. When the

girls come near the bridegroom's friends they throw at them balls of boiled rice, after which they beat a retreat. The young men pursue them to the door of the house, which, however, they cannot enter until they have made presents to its female defenders. The fact that among nearly all the peoples who have "marriage by combat," the children belong to the clan of their father, confirms the truth of the conclusion I have sought to establish, that the ceremony in question has relation to the clan, and not to the bride. Among the primitive peoples to whom it would be necessary, on the hypothesis of Sir John Lubbock, to trace the origin of that curious custom, the children usually belong to the family group of their mother. The sham-fight could be introduced when a change has taken place in the condition of women; but this would imply a phase of civilisation much more recent than that of the Australians and other barbarous tribes, to whose practice of stealing women for wives, which is mere forcible marriage, has been wrongly traced the origin of "marriage by capture."

Marriage Among Primitive Peoples

THE usual idea associated with the term "marriage" is the union in domestic life of a single pair of individuals, and with few exceptions this is the only marriage recognised by Christian peoples. We learn from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Hebrews had different ideas on that subject. They not only considered it allowable for a man to have more than one wife, but apparently they thought he might have as many wives as he chose. This system of marriage, to which the term polygamy has been usually applied, is still prevalent in most countries outside of the European area. The monogamous and polygamous forms of marriage are, however, by no means the only possible ones. Instead of a man and a woman living together, a number of individuals may thus associate,

and in lieu of a man having several wives a woman may conceivably have more than one husband. Moreover, marriage may be subject to varying regulations or restrictions, causing the same system to present dissimilar features in different localities. That which is *possible* in social life may reasonably be expected to occur somewhere or other on the earth's surface; and, as a fact, all the types of marriage referred to are to be found among peoples of the Eastern Hemisphere.

It can hardly be doubted that the most civilised races, of which we may call the modern world, have, with the exception of the Chinese, belonged to the two great branches of Caucasian stock, the Aryan and the Semitic-speaking peoples. Those races, and especially such of them as inhabit the Western part of the Old Continent, have shown a preference for monogamy or polygamy, the former being almost restricted to Europeans, the latter being nearly universal among the Asiatic portion of the Caucasian stock. The inferior races, however, possess the least advanced systems of marriage. The natives of the Australian Continent are usually regarded as the most uncivilised of mankind, and among them there has been developed a system which some persons would probably consider not entitled to the name of mar-

riage. In it individuals give place theoretically to groups, between whom marriage relation is supposed to be formed, the individuals being treated only as members of a group. The existence of this peculiar system has been established by the inquiries of the Rev. Lorimer Fison, who has shown, moreover, that Australian marriage "is something more than the marriage of group to group, *within a tribe*. It is an arrangement, extending across a Continent, which divides many widely-scattered tribes into intermarrying classes, and gives a man of one class marital rites over women of another class in a tribe a thousand miles away, and speaking a language other than his own. It seems to be strong evidence of the common origin of all the Australian tribes among whom it prevails; and it is a striking illustration of how custom remains fixed while language changes." An American writer, Mr. Lewis Morgan, who was the first to point out the prevalence among the less cultured races of mankind of relationship which he terms "*classificatory*," in opposition to the *descriptive* relationships of the superior races, states that, according to Australian marriage, "a group of males distinguished by the same class name are the born husbands of a group of females bearing another class name; and whenever

a male of this class meets a female of the other class, they recognise each other as husband and wife, and their right to live in this relation is regarded by the tribe to which they belong." The peculiarity of this system is, not that each individual is entitled to take a wife or husband out of a particular group, but that, in theory, every individual is from birth the husband or wife of all the members of a special group. Mr. Fison remarks further that the idea of marriage under that system is founded on the rights neither of the woman nor of the man. It is based "on the rights of the tribe, or rather of the classes into which the tribe is divided. Class marriage is not a contract entered into by two parties. It is a natural state into which both parties are born, and they have to be content with that state whereunto they are called." But what is the nature of the social organization to which the system of group marriage belongs? At the present time nearly all the existing Australian tribes are divided into four classes, into one of which every individual is born. The members of each class are supposed to trace their descent to the same common female ancestor, they are treated as of the same degrees of kinship to each other, and they are not allowed to intermarry. There is reason to believe that

originally, perhaps when the ancestors of all the existing tribes resided in the same neighbourhood, each tribe consisted of two classes. In this case, the law of group marriage, under the regulations as to marriage and descent just mentioned, would require that all the members of each class should be real or tribal brothers and sisters of each other, and the husbands and wives of all the members of the other class. The theoretical result would be, that all the men of each class would have their wives in common, and all the women of each class their husbands in common. Whether the number of individuals in each group was large or small, the result would be the same. In practice, the exercise of the extended marriage right would be restricted to a few individuals, but that its existence is generally understood is shown by the statement of a native servant, who had travelled far and wide in Australia, that "he was furnished with temporary wives by the various tribes with whom he sojourned in his travels; that his right to those women was recognised as a matter of course; and that he could always ascertain whether they belonged to the division into which he could legally marry, though the places were a thousand miles apart, and the languages quite different." This particular case

might, perhaps, be explained as an extreme example of the granting of sexual hospitality; but Mr. Fison refers to several facts which prove the reality of the relationships arising out of group marriage, and therefore of this system itself. He states that an Australian "has the rights of a brother, and he acknowledges the duties of a brother, towards every man of his own group; and he can no more marry a woman of a group which is 'sister' to his own than we can marry our own sister." Among the Australians, as among some other races who are supposed to have had at one time a similar marriage system, a mother-in-law and a son-in-law mutually avoid each other. This conduct is based on the fact that the mother-in-law belongs to the class of women over whom the son-in-law has a marital right, but as she is *specially* forbidden to him they must keep out of each other's way. Again, the incidents attendant on adoption are in accordance with the reality of group relationships. A person who is adopted into a gens or family "forthwith abandons all the relationships of his own gens, and takes those of the gens into which he is adopted," a result which is due to the fact that relationship is conceived, not between individual and individual, but between group and group. Extraordinary as is the

Australian system at the present time, when each class, or intermarrying group, embraces so many individuals, it would not appear so strange if, as was originally the case, each group consisted only of the immediate descendants of the common female ancestor. In this case all the males in any particular generation of each family group would be the husbands of all the females in the same generation of the other family; in other words, all the men of each group would have their wives in common and all the women their husbands in common. Moreover, the actual practice of the Australian tribes differs from the theory. Every man and every woman is permanently married to an individual of the opposite sex, and often this connection is formed at an early age by arrangement between the parents of the persons concerned. In addition, however, each of these persons may be allotted by the great council of the tribe as an "accessory spouse," or *pirauru,* to some other individual. The Australian system, therefore, presents a mixture of individual marriage and group marriage, the latter of which is evidently closely connected with the right of sexual hospitality, which is considered by the savage mind as natural and of great importance.

Australian marriage is thus based on what may be theoretically termed the natural marriage between two groups of individuals whose wishes are never consulted in the matter. The same arrangement might, of course, be made among the individuals themselves, and curiously enough, a form of group marriage, much restricted in its operation, was at one time fully recognised among the Polynesian Islands of the Pacific. This system was known as *punalua,* and it consisted in two or more brothers having their wives, or two or more sisters having their husbands in common. Here, brothers and sisters form one group, and the wives of the one with the husbands of the other, themselves being brothers and sisters (actual or tribal), form another group answering to the intermarrying classes of the Australians. The Polynesian *punalua* and the Australian group marriage are, therefore, fundamentally the same. The Australian system is much the more comprehensive, however, as it affects all the members of a class, while the Polynesian affects only the persons immediately concerned. Each punaluan group appears to be formed independently, with the consent of all the parties to the arrangement, and without conferring any sexual right on the children belonging to it. This is totally

unlike the Australian practice, which recognises individuals only as members of particular groups, standing to each other in a certain marital relation and perpetuated by descent through their female members. The latter may be described as *hereditary* punalua, as distinguished from the Polynesian system, which is purely personal.

Mr. Morgan points out that *punalua* may be of two forms, one founded on the brotherhood of the husbands, and the other on the sisterhood of the wives, the men of each group being polygamous and the women polyandrous. Both forms of that marriage arrangement are said to have existed among the natives of America, although, when discovered by Europeans, the family with them was founded on marriage between single pairs, but without exclusive cohabitation. Thus, it was not uncommon for a man who married an eldest daughter to claim all his wife's sisters, and he appears to have occasionally allowed his brothers to participate in the matrimonial privileges. In other cases, a man married the sister of his deceased wife as a matter of course, but he did not take her in his wife's lifetime. Similar customs exist in some parts of Australia, where the old system of marriage has been almost forgotten. The polyandrous

form of punalua was known to the Australians either as a feature of the group right, or in the course of its decadence. Thus, every woman had accessory husbands or paramours who associated with her temporarily, notwithstanding that she had a recognised husband with whom she habitually cohabited. Mr. T. E. Lance mentions a tribe in which most of the women are nominally the wives of elderly men, who are, however, obliged to lend them on stated occasions to the younger men of the allowed classes.

It is evident that circumstances may favour the development of either the polyandrous or the polygamous form of punalua to the exclusion of the other. A scarcity of women would tend to the establishment of the former system, as we see in the case of the Todas of Southern India. This fine race of hillmen were inveterate practisers of female infanticide down to a recent date, and it was almost the universal practice for a family of near relations to live together in one hut, having wife, children, and cattle in common. The continued formation of such alliances appears to have led to a result much resembling the group marriage of the Australians. As Colonel Marshall states, "the family come to be represented mainly by a knot of brothers, half-brothers, and cousins, married to

closely related kinswomen in nearly equal numbers; the men being the common fathers of all the progeny; each woman, however, the mother of her own children only." The Todas have, under British influence, given up the practice of infanticide, but they have fewer female than male children, owing to a preponderance of male births, and polyandry is still customary among them. A woman is at first married with her own consent to one man, who pays the dowry. Afterwards, however, "if the husband has brothers, or very near relatives, all living together, they may each, if both she and he consent, participate in the right to be considered her husband also, on making up a share of the dowry that has been paid." Notwithstanding the example of the Todas, it must not be thought that a scarcity of women is essential to the existence of polyandry. In Tibet this system of marriage is universal, and it has been so from time immemorial. Nevertheless, unmarried women are numerous, and infanticide is not practised. Mr. Andrew Wilson defined Tibetan polyandry as the marriage of one woman to two or more brothers and these are actual brothers, although at one time probably they may also have been tribal. The choice of a wife is the right of the elder brother, and Mr. Wilson states that

"among the Tibetan-speaking people it universally prevails that the contract he makes is understood to involve a marital contract with all the brothers, if they choose to avail themselves of it." Moreover, all the children of the marriage belong to the eldest brother, as the head of the family group. In Ladak, however, the consent of the younger brothers is required to the marital partnership, although on the death of the eldest brother his authority, with his property and his widow, devolve upon his next brother, whether or not there has been a polyandrous arrangement. Mr. Wilson observes that Tibetan polyandry had the effect "of checking the increase of population in regions from which emigration is difficult, and where it is also difficult to increase the means of subsistence." It is due to an artificial scarcity of *wives,* rather than of women, in which it differs from the polyandry of the Todas, which is the consequence of an actual scarcity of females, caused originally by the practice of infanticide, and afterwards by a preponderance of male births. Both the Tibetans and the Todas trace descent through the male line—that is, take the family or gentile name of the father; but some peoples of Southern India, who practice polyandry, prefer the female line. This is not

surprising, when we find, as among the Nairs of Malabar, that not only has a woman several husbands, but a man "may be one in several combinations of husbands." Such unions, which are governed by certain restrictions as to tribe and caste, closely resemble the Australian group marriage. In Ceylon, where polyandry is very prevalent among the Kandyans, marriage is of two forms, one termed *deega,* in which the wife goes to live in the house and village of her husband or husbands, the other, termed *beena,* in which the husband or husbands come to reside with her in the house of her birth. The Tibetan polyandry may be a form of the *deega* marriage, and the Nair polyandry a form of the *beena* marriage, although it is possible that the latter may be a "mere freak," if it be true (as Mr. Wilson affirms) that the Nairs are nominally married to girls of their own caste, but never have any intercourse with their wives, who may have as many lovers as they please, provided they are Brahmins or Nairs, other than the husband. These lovers answer to the paramours of the Australian system, but, whereas the latter occupy a secondary place, among the Nairs it is the husband who is in that position. This custom may not improbably be explained by the remarks of a Moham-

medan writer, who says, with regard to the marriages of the Brahmins of Malabar, "when there are several brothers in one family, the eldest of them alone enters into the conjugal state (except in cases where it is evident that he will have no issue), the remainder refraining from marriage, in order that heirs may not multiply to the confusion of inheritance. The younger brothers, however, intermarry with women of the Nair caste without entering into any compact with them, thus following the custom of the Nairs, who have themselves no conjugal contract. In the event of any children being born from these connections, they are excluded from the inheritance; but should it appear evident that the elder brother will not have issue, then another brother, the next to him in age, will marry." The irregular marriages with the Nair women were, perhaps, introduced by the Brahmins to provide wives for the brothers of their caste who were not allowed to marry. The original Nair polyandry may have been similar to that of the carpenters, ironsmiths, painters, and other Malabar castes, who (says the same writer) "cohabit, two or more together, with one woman, but not unless they are brothers, or in some way related, lest confusion should ensue in the inheritance of property."

It is thought, from certain facts mentioned in the Mahá Bhárata, that polyandry was a recognised institution among the early Hindus, and that the eldest brother had the right, as now among the Tibetans, to choose a wife for the family. Some writers have gone so far even as to assert that all the peoples of the primitive Aryan stock, and our own British ancestors amongst them, practised the same custom or some form of group marriage. Mr. J. F. M'Lennan regarded the Hebrew law of the Levirate, which required a younger son to take his elder brother's widow if he had died childless, as having been derived from the practice of polyandry. Whether this was so, or whether it was merely a regulation to prevent the elder branch of a stock from becoming extinct, traces of polyandry have undoubtedly been met with among peoples of the Semitic stock. It would seem, however, to have been most prevalent among the tribes of Southern Arabia, and it was probably due, chiefly to the poverty of the people, as among the Tibetans, who may have directly influenced the development of polyandry in Arabia. The true marriage system of the Semitic peoples was punalua of the polygamous form, in which several sisters had a husband in common. We have an instance of it in the marriage of

Jacob with the sisters Leah and Rachel. At a later period, however, when blood or even tribal relationship between the wives was not required, the practice of polygamy becomes fully established. This system has attained its chief development among the Semitic races and those African peoples who are allied to them by blood. The most widely-spread forms of marriage now existing are polygamy and monogamy, and while the former may be traced to the polygamous phase of punalua or group marriage, it is not improbable that the latter is traceable to the polyandrous phase. At all events, monogamy has been established chiefly among those races who are supposed, formerly, to have been polyandrous. The Australians, among whom group marriage has reached so full a development, are said to show a tendency to the introduction of individual marriage. Descent through the female line, which was, at one time, universal among them, is giving place to descent through males, where residence has become fixed and property accumulated. The change is accompanied by a weakening of the group right, and the gradual introduction of marriage "by gifts, by exchange, by capture, and by elopement, one or other of these predominating." The rights of the individual are thus substituted for

those of the group, and individual marriage is recognised.

Strange as are the various marriage systems we have referred to, they are based on the very simple principle that every individual has a sexual right. The conditions under which this right may be exercised vary among different peoples, their operation giving rise to the peculiar married arrangements in question. Among the Australians, almost the only restriction on sexual unions appears to be that arising from consanguinity. Their marriage regulations have evidently been formed with the intention of absolutely prohibiting unions between persons near of kin. Although marriage with a sister of the half-blood is often permitted, and for special reasons marriage with a full sister may be allowed, the objection to consanguineous unions may be declared to be universal among peoples of a low degree of culture. Their marriage regulations, however, are generally intended to have certain positive results. The chief result aimed at would seem to be the prevention of over-population. This fact, combined with the recognition of the sexual rights of man, accounts for the polyandry of the Tibetans and the Hindus, and the attainment of it is in many cases aided by the practice of infanticide.

Polygamy on the other hand has no apparent relation to the question of population. It is connected rather with the rights of the gens or family to which the women belong, the man having, in many cases, certain duties to perform before he can obtain his wife or wives. The development of polygamy is, moreover, attended with an invasion of the sexual rights of individuals; as the appropriation of the women by the rich or powerful often renders the obtaining of wives by the poor or weak difficult, if not impossible.

The objection entertained by peoples of a low degree of culture to the marriage of persons near of kin is a strong ground of objection to Mr. Morgan's theory that consanguineous unions were the earliest to be formed; in other words, that "promiscuous intermarriage between brothers and sisters and others of the closest kin" was, at one time, customary. Mr. Fison refers to certain practices which he thinks point to the former existence of such a state of things among the Australians. In reality, however, they are merely incidents of the group marriage, which has been developed by that race, or at most, the result of temporary suspension under special circumstances of the restrictions which that system enforces. They are, indeed, cases of licentiousness similar to what is often

met with among many peoples during religious and other festivals. The occurrence of a temporary condition of lawlessness on various occasions, such as the death of a chief or the celebration of an important event, is not unknown even to civilised nations. Mr. Morgan's opinion as to the former prevalence of consanguineous marriages derives no real support from the fact mentioned by Mr. Fison, and as I have elsewhere shown, marriages of that character are not required to account for the phenomena exhibited in the classificatory system of relationship which exists among the primitive races of mankind.

Origin of Serpent Worship

THE subject to be discussed in the present chapter is one of the most fascinating that can engage the attention of anthropologists. It is remarkable, however, that although so much has been written in relation to it, we are still almost in the dark as to the origin of the superstition in question. The student of mythology knowns that certain ideas were associated by the peoples of antiquity with the serpent, and that it was the favourite symbol of particular deities; but why that animal rather than any other was chosen for the purpose is yet uncertain. The facts being well known, however, I shall dwell on them only so far as may be necessary to support the conclusions based upon them.

We are indebted to Mr. Fergusson for bringing to-

gether a large array of facts, showing the extraordinary range which serpent-worship had among ancient nations. It is true that he supposes it not to have been adopted by any nation belonging to the Semitic or Aryan stock; the serpent-worship of India and Greece originating, as he believes, with the older peoples. However this may be, the superstition was certainly not unknown to either the Aryans or Semites. The brazen serpent of the Hebrew exodus was destroyed in the reign of Hezekiah, owing to the idolatry to which it gave rise. In the mythology of the Chaldeans, from whom the Assyrians seem to have sprung, the serpent occupied a most important position. Among the allied Phœnicians and Egyptians it was one of the most divine symbols. In Greece, Hercules was said "to have been the progenitor of the whole race of serpent-worshipping Scythians, through his intercourse with the serpent Echidna;" and when Minerva planted the sacred olive on the Acropolis of Athens, she placed it under the care of the serpent-deity Erechthonios. As to the Latins, Mr. Fergusson remarks that "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' are full of passages referring to the important part which the serpent performed in all the traditions of classic mythology." The superstitions connected with that

animal are supposed not to have existed among the ancient Gauls and Germans; but this is extremely improbable, considering that it appears to have been known to the British Celts and to the Gothic inhabitants of Scandinavia. In Eastern Europe there is no doubt that the serpent superstition was anciently prevalent, and Mr. Fergusson refers to evidence proving that "both trees and serpents were worshipped by the peasantry in Esthonia and Finland within the limits of the present century, and even with all the characteristics possessed by the old faith when we first became acquainted with it."

The serpent entered largely into the mythology of the ancient Persians, as it does into that of the Hindus. In India it is associated with both Sivaism and Vishnuism, although its actual worship perhaps belonged rather to the aboriginal tribes among whom Buddhism is thought by recent writers to have originated. The modern home of the superstition, however, is Western Africa, where the serpent is not merely considered sacred, but is actually worshipped as divine. On the other side of the Indian Ocean traces of the same superstition are met with among the peoples of the Indian islands and of Polynesia, and also in China. The evidences of serpent-worship

on the American Continent have long engaged the attention of archæologists, who have found it to be almost universal, under one form or another, among the aboriginal tribes. That animal was sculptured on the temples of Mexico and Peru, and its form is said by Mr. Squier to be of frequent occurrence among the mounds of Wisconsin. The most remarkable of the symbolic earthworks of North America is the great serpent mound of Adam's county, Ohio, the convolutions of which extend to a length of 1,000 feet. At the Edinburgh meeting of the British Association, in 1871, Mr. Phené gave an account of his discovery in Argyllshire of a similar mound several hundred feet long, and about fifteen feet high by thirty feet broad, tapering gradually to the tail, the head being surmounted by a circular cairn, which he supposes to answer to the solar disc above the head of the Egyptian uræus, the position of which, with head erect, answers to the form of the Oban serpent-mound. This discovery is of great interest, and its author is probably justified in assuming that the mound was connected with serpent-worship. It may be remarked, in evidence of the existence of such structures in other parts of the old world, that the hero of one of the Yaçnas of the Zend Avesta is made

to rest on what he thinks is a bank, but what he finds to be a great green snake, doubtless a serpent-mound. Another ancient reference to these structures is made by Iphicrates, who, according to Bryant, "related that in Mauritania there were dragons of such extent, that grass grew upon their backs."

Let us now see what ideas have been associated with the serpent by various peoples. Mr. Fergusson mentions the curious fact that "the chief characteristic of the serpent throughout the East in all ages seems to have been their power over the wind and rain." According to Colonel Meadows Taylor, in the Indian Deccan, at the present day, offerings are made to the village divinities (of whom the nâg, or snake, is always one) at spring time and harvest, for rain or fine weather, and also in time of cholera or other diseases or pestilence. So, among the Chinese, the dragon is regarded as the giver of rain, and in time of drought offerings are made to it. In the spring and fall of the year it is one of the objects worshipped, by command of the Emperer, by certain mandarins. The Chinese notion of the serpent or dragon dwelling above the clouds in spring to give rain reminds us of the Aryan myth of Vritra, or Ahi, the throttling snake, or dragon with three heads, who hides away

the rain-clouds, but who is slain by Indra, the beneficent giver of rain. "Whenever," says Mr. Cox, "the rain is shut up in the clouds, the dark power is in revolt against Dyaus and Indra. In the rumblings of the thunder, while the drought still sucks out the life of the earth, are heard the mutterings of their hateful enemy. In the lightning flashes which precede the outburst of the pent-up waters are seen the irresistible spears of the god, who is attacking the throttling serpent in his den; and in the serene heaven which shone out when the deluging clouds are passed away, men beheld the face of the mighty deity who was their friend." Mr. Cox elsewhere remarks that Vritra, "the enemy of Indra, reappears in all the dragons, snakes, or worms slain by all the heroes of Aryan mythology."

Whether the great serpent be the giver or the storer of rain, the Aryans, like all Eastern peoples, suppose it to have power over the clouds. This, however, is only one of its attributes. It is thought to have power over the wind as well as the rain, and this also is confirmed by reference to Aryan mythology. Mr. Cox has well shown that Hermes is "the air in motion, or wind, varying in degree from the soft breath of a summer breeze to the rage of the growing hurricane." In these more violent moods he is represented

by the Maruts, the "crushers" or "grinders," who are also the children of Rudra, the "Father of the Winds," and himself the "wielder of the thunder-bolt" and the "mightiest of the mighty." Rudra is also "the robber, the cheat, the deceiver, the master thief," and in this character both he and Hermes agree with the cloud-thief Vritra.

Notwithstanding the fact that in the Mahâbharâta, Rudra, like Hercules, is described as the "destroyer of serpents," he is in the same poem identified with Mahadeva, and hence he is evidently the same as Siva, who has the title of King of Serpents. The primitive character of Siva, as the Vedic Rudra, is now almost lost, but the identity of the two deities may be supported by reference to an incident related in the myth of Hermes and Apollo. It is said that, in return for the sweet-sounding lyre, Apollo gave to Hermes the magical "three-leafed rod of wealth and happiness." Sometimes this rod was entwined with serpents instead of fillets, and there is no difficulty in recognising in it the well-known emblem of Siva, which also is sometimes encircled by serpents. It can be shown that the Hindu deity is a form of Saturn, one of the Semitic names for whom was Set or Seth. It was the serpent-symbol of this God which was said

to have been elevated in the wilderness for the healing of the people bitten by serpents, and curiously enough Rudra (Siva) was called not only the *bountiful,* the *strong,* but the *healer.* The later Egyptian title of the god Set was Typhon, of whom Mr. Breal says that "Typhon is the monster who obscures the heaven, a sort of Greek Vritra." The myth of Indra and Vritra is reproduced in Latin mythology as that of Hercules and Cãcus. Cãcus also is analogous to Typhon, and as the former is supposed to have taken his name from, or given it to, a certain wind which had the power of clothing itself with clouds, so the latter bore the same name as a very destructive wind which was much dreaded by the Phœnicians and Egyptians. Moreover, the name Typhon was given by the Egyptians to anything tempestuous, and hence to the ocean; and in Hebrew the allied word "Suph" denotes a "whirlwind." There is another point of contact, however, between Siva and the god of Set or Typhon, who was known to the Egyptians also as the serpent Aphôphis, or the giant. An ancient writer states that one of the names of El, or Chronos, was Typhon, and the serpent and pillar symbols of the Phœnician deity confirm the identification between Set or Saturn, and the Siva of the Hindu Pantheon.

One of the leading ideas connected with the serpent was, as we have seen, its power over the rain, but another equally influential was its connection with health. Mr. Fergusson remarks that "when we first meet with serpent-worship, either in the wilderness of Sinai, the groves of Epidaurus, or in the Sarmation huts, the serpent is always the Agatho-dæmon, the bringer of health and good fortune." The Agatho-dæmon, which in ancient Egypt presided over the affairs of men as the guardian spirit of their houses, was the Asp of Ranno, the snake-headed goddess who is represented as nursing the young princes. That the idea of health was intimately associated with the serpent is shown by the crown formed of the asp or sacred *Thermuthis,* having been given particularly to Isis, a goddess of life and healing. It was also the symbol of other deities with the like attributes. Thus on a papyri it encircles the figure of Harpocrates, who was identified with the serpent god Æsculapius; while not only was a great serpent kept alive in the temple of Serapis, but on later monuments this deity is represented by a great serpent, with or without a human head. Sanchoniathon says of that animal—"It is long-lived, and has the quality not only of putting off its old age and assuming a sec-

ond youth, but of receiving at the same time an augmentation of its size and strength." The serpent, therefore, was a fit emblem of Rudra, "the healer"; and the gift which Apollo presented to Mercury could be entwined by no more appropriate object than the animal which was supposed to be able to give the health without which even Mercury's magic-staff could not confer wealth and happiness. It is remarkable that a Moslem saint of Upper Egypt is still thought to appear under the form of a serpent, and to cure the diseases which afflict the pilgrims to his shrine.

Ramahavaly, one of the four national idols of the Malagasy, bears a curious analogy to the serpent gods of wisdom and healing. One of his titles is *Rabiby,* signifying "animal," and denoting "the god of beasts"; and his emissaries are the serpents which abide in Madagascar, and are looked upon with superstitious fear by the inhabitants. Ramahavaly is, moreover, regarded as the Physician of Imerina, and is thought to preserve from, or expel, epidemic diseases. Mr. Ellis says that he is sometimes described "as god, sacred, powerful, and almighty; who kills and makes alive; who heals the sick, and prevents diseases and pestilence; who can cause thunder and

lightning to strike their victims or prevent their fatility; can cause rain in abundance when wanted, or can withhold it so as to ruin the crops of rice. He is also celebrated for his knowledge of the past and future, and for his capacity of discovering whatever is hidden or concealed."

It is probable that the association with the serpent of the idea of healing arose from the still earlier recognition of that animal as a symbol of life. We have already referred to the representations in the Egyptian temples of the young princes being nursed by a woman having the head of an asp. It is interesting to find that in India at the present day serpent-worship is expressly resorted to on behalf of children, and "the first hair of a child which is shaved off when it has passed teething and other infantine ailments is frequently dedicated to a serpent." This animal in both cases is treated as the guardian of life, and therefore the crown given to Egyptian sovereigns and divinities was very properly formed of the asp of Rânno. Another snake-headed Egyptian goddess has the name *Hih* or *Hoh,* and Sir Gardner Wilkinson mentions that the Coptic word *Hof* signifies the viper, analogous to the *hye* of the Arabs. The Arabic word *hiya,* indeed, means both life and a serpent.

This connection is supported by the association, already pointed out, between the serpent and the gods of the life-giving wind, and by the fact that these also possess the pillar symbol of life. This belongs as well to Siva the destroyer, the preserver, and the creator, as to Set or Saturn, to Thoth-Hermes, and El or Chronos. Both the serpent and the pillar were assigned also to many of the personifications of the sun, the deified source of earthly life. Probably the well-known figure representing the serpent with its tail in its mouth was intended to symbolise endless life rather than eternity, an idea which does not appear to have been associated with that animal by the Egyptians. Agreeably with this view, Horapollo affirms that Kneph-Agatho-dæmon denoted immortality.

One of the best-known attributes of the serpent is wisdom. The Hebrew tradition of the fall speaks of that animal as the most subtle of the beasts of the field; and the founder of Christianity tells his disciples to be as wise as serpents, though as harmless as doves. Among the ancients the serpent was consulted as an oracle, and Maury points out that it played an important part in the life of several celebrated Greek diviners in connection with the knowledge of the language of birds, which many of the ancients be-

lieved to be the souls of the dead. The serpent was associated with Apollo and Athené, the Grecian deities of wisdom, as well as with the Egyptian Kneph, the ram-headed god from whom the Gnostics are sometimes said to have derived their idea of the *Sophia*. This personification of divine wisdom is undoubtedly represented on Gnostic gems under the form of the serpent. In Hindu mythology there is the same association between the animal and the idea of wisdom. Siva, as Sambhu, is the patron of the Brahmanic order, and, as shown by his being three-eyed, is essentially a god possessing high intellectual attributes. Vishnu also is a god of wisdom, but of the somewhat lower type which is distinctive of the worshippers of truth under its feminine aspect. The connection between wisdom and the serpent is best seen, however, in the Hindu legends as to the Nagas. Mr. Fergusson remarks that "the Naga appears everywhere in Vaishnava tradition. There is no more common representation of Vishnu than as reposing on the Sesha, the celestial seven-headed snake, contemplating the creation of the world. It was by his assistance that the ocean was churned and Amrita produced. He everywhere spreads his protecting hood over the god or his avatars; and in all instances it is

the seven-headed heavenly Naga, not the earthly cobra of Siva." The former animal, no doubt, is especially symbolical of wisdom, and it is probably owing to his intellectual attributes, rather than to his destructive or creative powers, that Siva is sometimes styled the King of Serpents. The Upanishads refer to the science of serpents, by which is meant the wisdom of the mysterious Nagas, who, according to Buddhistic legend, reside under Mount Méru, and in the waters of the terrestrial world. One of the sacred books of the Tibetan Buddhists is fabled to have been received from the Nagas, who, says Schlagentweit, are "fabulous creatures of the nature of serpents, who occupy a place among the beings superior to man, and are regarded as protectors of the law of the Buddha. To these spiritual beings Sâkyamuni is said to have taught a more philosophical religious system than to men, who were not sufficiently advanced to understand it at the time of his appearance." So far as this has any historical basis, it can mean only that Gautama taught his most secret doctrines to the Nagas, or aboriginal serpent-worshippers, who were the first to accept his teaching, and whose religious ideas had probably much in common with those of Gautama himself. Mr. Fergusson refers to the fact

that a king of the Naga race was reigning in Magadha when Buddha was born in 623 B.C.; and he adds that the dissemination of his religion "is wholly due to the accident of its having been adopted by the low caste kings of Magadha, and to its having been elevated by one of them to the rank of the religion of the state." It would appear, indeed, that according to a Hindu legend, Gautama himself had a serpent lineage.

The "serpent-science" of Hindu legend has a curious parallel in Phœnician mythology. The invention of the Phœnician written character is referred to the god Taaut or Thoth, whose snake-symbol bears his name Têt, and is used to represent the ninth letter of the alphabet (*teta*), which in the oldest Phœnician character has the form of the snake curling itself up. Philo thus explains the form of the letter *theta,* and that the god from whom it took its name was designated by the Egyptians as a snake curled up, with its head turned inwards. Philo adds that the letters of the Phœnician alphabet "are those formed by means of serpents; afterwards, when they built temples, they assigned them a place in the adytums, instituted various ceremonies and solemnities in honour of them, and adored them as the supreme gods, the rulers of the universe." Bunsen thinks the sense of this passage

is "that the forms and movements of serpents were employed in the invention of the oldest letters, which represent the gods." He says, however, that "the alphabet does not tally at all with the Phœnician names," and the explanation given by Philo, although curious as showing the ideas anciently associated with the serpent, is reliable only so far as it confirms the connection between that animal and the inventor of the written characters. According to another tradition, the ancient theology of Egypt was said to have been given by the Agatho-dæmon, who was the benefactor of all mankind.

The account given of the serpent by Sanchoniathon, as cited by Eusebius, is worth repetition as showing the peculiar notions anciently current in connection with that animal. The Phœnician writer says :"Taautus first attributed something of the divine nature to the serpent and the serpent tribe, in which he was followed by the Phœnicians and Egyptians; for this animal was esteemed by him to be the most inspired of all the reptiles, and of a fiery nature, inasmuch as it exhibits an incredible celerity, moving by its spirit without either hands or feet, or any of those external members by which other animals effect their motion, and in its progress it assumes a variety

of forms, moving in a spiral course, and darting forwards with whatever degree of swiftness it pleases. It is, moreover, long-lived, and has the quality not only of putting off its old age, and assuming a second youth, but of receiving at the same time an augmentation of its size and strength, and when it has fulfilled the appointed measure of its existence it consumes itself, as Taautus has laid down in the sacred books; upon which account this animal is introduced in the sacred rites and mysteries." In India at the present day some Brahmans always keep the skin of a nâg, or snake, in one of their sacred books, probably from some idea connected with the casting by the serpent of its skin referred to in the preceding passage.

We have now seen that the serpent was anciently the symbol of wisdom, life, and healing, and also that it was thought to have power over the wind and rain. This last attribute is easily understood when the importance of rain in the east is considered, and the ideas associated by the ancients with the air and moisture are remembered. The Hebrew tradition which speaks of the creative spirit moving over the face of the waters embodies those ideas, according to which the water contains the elements of life and the wind is the vivifying principle. The attribute of wis-

dom cannot so easily be connected with that of life. The power of healing is certainly an evidence of the possession of wisdom, but as it is only one phase of it, probably the latter attribute was antecedent to the former, or at least it may have had an independent origin. What this origin was may perhaps be explained by reference to certain other ideas very generally entertained in relation to the serpent. Among various African tribes this animal is viewed with great veneration, under the belief that it is often the re-embodiment of a deceased ancestor. This notion appears to be prevalent also among the Hindus, who, like the Kafirs, will never kill a serpent, although it is usually regarded with more dislike than veneration. Mr. Squier remarks that "many of the North American tribes entertain a superstitious regard for serpents, and particularly for the rattlesnake. Though always avoiding they never destroy it, 'lest,' says Barham, 'the spirit of the reptile should excite its kindred to revenge'." Mr. Squier adds that, "according to Adair, this fear was not unmingled with veneration. Charlevoix states that the Natchez had the figure of a rattlesnake, carved from wood, placed among other objects upon the altar of their temple, to which they paid great honour. Heckwelder relates that the Linni Len-

ape called the rattlesnake 'grandfather,' and would on no account allow it to be destroyed. Hemy states that the Indians around Lake Huron had a similar superstition and also designated the rattlesnake as their 'grandfather.' He also mentions instances in which offerings of tobacco were made to it, and its parental care solicited for the party performing the sacrifice. Carver also mentions an instance of similar regard on the part of a Menominee Indian, who carried a rattlesnake constantly with him, 'treating it as a deity, and calling it his great father'."

The most curious notion, however, is that of the Mexicans, who always represented the first woman, whose name was translated by the old Spanish writers "the woman of our flesh," as accompanied by a great male serpent. The serpent is the sun-god *Tonacatlcoatl,* the principal deity of the Mexican Pantheon, and his female companion, the goddess mother of mankind, has the title *cihua-cohuatl,* which signifies "woman of the serpent." With the Peruvians, also, the principal deity was the serpent-sun, whose wife, the female serpent, gave birth to a boy and a girl from whom all mankind were said to be descended. It is remarkable that the serpent origin thus ascribed to the human race is not confined to the

aborigines of America. According to Herodotus, the primeval mother of the Scyths was a monster, half woman and half serpent. This reminds us of the serpent parentage ascribed to various personages of classical antiquity. Among the Semites, Zohak, the traditional Arabian conqueror of Central Asia, is represented as having two snakes growing at his back; and Mr. Bruce mentions that the line of the Abyssinian kings begins with "The Serpent," *Arwe,* who is said to have reigned at Axum for 400 years, showing that the royal descent was traced from this animal. From the position assigned to the dragon in China, it probably was formerly thought to stand in a similar relation to the Emperor, of whom it is the special symbol.

The facts cited prove that the serpent superstition is intimately connected with ancestor-worship, probably originating among uncultured tribes, who, struck by the noiseless movement and the activity of the serpent, combined with its peculiar gaze and power of casting its skin, viewed it as a spirit embodiment. As such, it would be supposed to have the superior wisdom and power ascribed to the denizens of the invisible world, and from this would originate also the ascription to it of the power over life and health,

and over the moisture on which those benefits are dependent. The serpent-spirit may, however, have made its appearance for a good or a bad purpose, to confer a benefit or to inflict punishment for the misdeeds of the living. The notion of there being good and evil serpent-spirits would thus naturally arise. Among ancestor-worshipping peoples, however, the serpent would be viewed as a good being who busied himself about the interests of the tribe to which he had once belonged. When the simple idea of a spirit-ancestor was transformed into that of the Great Spirit, the father of the race, the attributes of the serpent would be enlarged. The common ancestor would be relegated to the heavens, and that which was necessary to the life and well-being of his people would be supposed to be under his care. Hence the great serpent was thought to have power over the rain and the hurricane, with the latter of which he was probably often identified.

When the serpent was thus transferred to the atmosphere, and the superstition lost its simple character as a phase of ancestor-worship, its most natural association would be with the solar cult. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that *Quetzalcoatl,* the divine benefactor of the Mexicans, was an incarnation

of the serpent-sun *Tonacatlcoatl,* who thus became the great father, as the female serpent *Cihuacoatl* was the great mother, of the human race. It is an interesting inquiry how far the sun-gods of other peoples partook of this double character. Bunsen has a remarkable passage bearing on the serpent nature of those deities. He says that "Esmun-Esculapius is strictly a Phœnician god. He was especially worshipped at Berytus. At Carthage he was called the highest god, together with Astarte and Hercules. At Babylon, according to the above genealogy of Bel, Apollo corresponded to him. As the snake-god he must actually be Hermes, in Phœnician Têt, Taautes. . . . In an earlier stage of cosmogonical consciousness he is Agatho-dæmon-Sôs, whom Lepsius has shown to be the third god in the first order of the Egyptian Pantheon." The serpent deity who was thus known under so many forms was none other than the sun-god Set or Saturn, who has already been identified with Siva and other deities having the attributes usually ascribed to the serpent. Bunsen asserts that Set is common to all the Semites and Chaldeans, as he was to the Egyptians, but that "his supposed identity was Saturn is not so old as his identity with the sun-god, as Sirius (Sôthis), because the sun has the great-

est power when it is in Sirius." Elsewhere the same writer says that "the Oriento-Egyptian conception of Typhon-Set was that of a drying-up parching heat. Set is considered as the sun-god when he has reached his zenith, the god of the summer sun."

The solar character of the serpent-god appears therefore to be placed beyond doubt. But what was the relation in which he was supposed to stand to the human race? Bunsen, to whose labours I am so much indebted, remarks that Seth "appears gradually among the Semites as the background of their religious consciousness," and not merely was he "the primitive god of northern Egypt and Palestine," but his genealogy as "the Seth of Genesis, the father of Enoch (the man), must be considered as originally running parallel with that derived from the Elohim, Adam's father." Seth is thus the divine ancestor of the Semites, a character in which, but in relation to other races, the solar deities generally agree with him. The kings and priests of ancient peoples claimed this divine origin, and "children of the sun" was the title of the members of the sacred caste. When the actual ancestral character of the deity is hidden he is regarded as "the father of his people" and their divine benefactor. He is the introducer of agriculture, the

inventor of arts and sciences, and the civiliser of mankind; "characteristics," says Faber, "which every nation ascribed to the first of their gods or the oldest of their kings." This was true of Thoth, Saturn, and other analogous deities, and the Adam of Hebrew tradition was the father of agriculture, as his representative Noah was the introducer of the vine.

Elsewhere I have endeavoured to show that the name of the great ancestor of Hebrew tradition has been preserved by certain peoples who may thus be classed together as Adamites. He appears, indeed, to be the recognised legendary ancestor of the members of that division of mankind whose primeval home we can scarcely doubt was in Central Asia, answering in this respect to the Seth of the Semites. According to the tradition, however, as handed down to us by the Hebrews, Seth himself was the son of Adam. From this, it would seem to follow that, as Seth was the serpent sun-god (the Agatho-dæmon), the legendary ancestor of the Adamites must himself have partaken of the same character. Strange as this idea may appear it is not without warrant. We have already seen that the Mexicans ascribed that nature to *Tonacatl-coatl* and his wife, the mother of mankind, and that a similar notion was entertained by various peoples of

the old world. The Chaldean god *Héa* who, as the "teacher of mankind," and the "lord of understanding," answers exactly to the divine benefactor of the race before referred to, was "figured by the great serpent which occupies so conspicuous a place among the symbols of the gods on the black stones recording Babylonian benefactions." The name of the god is connected with the Arabic *Hiya,* which signifies a serpent as well as life, and Sir Henry Rawlinson says that "there are very strong grounds indeed for connecting him with the serpent of Scripture, and with the Paradisaical traditions of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life." The god Héa was, therefore, the serpent revealer of knowledge, answering in some respects to the serpent of the fall. He was, however, the Agatho-dæmon, and in the earlier form of the legend doubtless answered to the great human ancestor himself. It is curious that, according to Rabbinical tradition, Cain was the son, not of Adam, but of the serpent-spirit Asmodeus, who is the same as the Persian Ahriman, "the great serpent with two feet." In the name of Eve, the mother of mankind, we have, indeed, direct reference to the supposed serpent-nature of our first parents. Clemens Alexandrinus long since remarked that the name *Hevia,* aspirated, signi-

fies a female serpent. The name Eve is evidently connected with the same Arabic root as that which we have seen to mean both "life" and "a serpent," and the Persians appear to have called the constellation *Serpens* "the little Ava," that is *Eve,* a title which is still given to it by the Arabs. But if Eve was the serpent mother, Adam must have been the serpent father. In the old Akkad tongue *Ad* signifies "a father," and the mythical personages with whom Adam is most nearly allied, such as Seth or Saturn, Taaut or Thoth, and others, were serpent deities. Such would seem to have been the case also with the deities whose names show a close formal resemblance to that of Adam. Thus the original name of Hercules was *Sandan* or *Adanos,* and Hercules, like the allied god Mars, was undoubtedly often closely associated with the serpent. This notion is confirmed by the identification of Adonis and Osiris as *Azar* or *Adar,* according to Bunsen the later Egyptian *Sar-Apis,* who is known to have been represented as a serpent. The *Abaddon* of St. John, the old dragon Satan, was probably intended for the same serpent-god. It is interesting to compare the ideas entertained as to the great dragon in the Book of Revelation and those held by the Chinese in relation to probably the same

being. Mr. Doolittle says "The dragon holds a remarkable position in the history and government of China. It also enjoys an ominous eminence in the affections of the Chinese people. It is frequently represented as the greatest benefactor of mankind. It is the dragon which causes the clouds to form and the rain to fall. The Chinese delight in praising its wonderful properties and powers. It is the venerated symbol of good."

This was probably the view originally taken by the Egyptians, who were all followers of the serpent cult. In Egypt two kinds of serpents were the objects of peculiar veneration, and of an almost universal worship. All the gods were more or less symbolised or crowned by serpents, while all the goddesses were hieroglyphically represented by serpents. The animal used for these purposes was the cobra de copello, or uræus, which, according to Mr. W. R. Cooper, "from its dangerous beauty, and in consequence of ancient tradition asserting it to have been spontaneously produced by the rays of the sun," was universally assumed as the "emblem of divine and sacro-regal sovereignty." The uræus appears to be always represented on the Egyptian monuments, in the feminine form, and it was used as a symbol of fecundity, agree-

ably to which idea the generative power of the solar beams is typified by pendent uræi. The uræus, moreover, symbolised life and the power of healing, and it was the emblem of immortality. Mr. Cooper remarks that in the Egyptian religious system the principle of good was typically represented by a serpent, while under the form of an entirely different serpent was figured a monstrous *personal* evil being who maintained a constant spiritual warfare with the spirit of good. The serpent embodiment of the principle of evil was called Hof, Rehof, or Aphôphis, and it was a species of coluber of large size. It is described as "the destroyer, the enemy of the gods, and the devourer of the souls of men;" and it was thought to dwell in the depths of "that mysterious ocean upon which the Baris, or boat of the sun, was navigated by the gods through the hours of day and night, in the celestial regions." The idea of an antagonism between the giant serpent Aphôphis and the good serpent, as the "soul of the world," constantly occurs in the Ritual of the Dead, and the aid of every divinity in turn is sought by the deceased in his conflict with the evil being. It is remarkable that the "soul of the world," Chnuphis, or Bait, is represented as a coluber, and that it appears to be identified with Aphôphis in one

chapter of the Ritual. Mr. Cooper states that, although a large coluber which is figured as being worshipped resembles Aphôphis, it cannot be him, as there is no example of direct worship paid to Aphôphis, "unless, indeed, we identify it with Sutekh, as the Shepherd Kings, the last but one of whom was named Aphôphis, appear to have done." The serpent Aphôphis is sometimes represented with the crown of Lower Egypt upon his head, and at one period he was identified with Set or Seth, the national deity of the Hyksos or Shepherd tribes. All traces of the worship of Set were obliterated from the Egyptian monuments, but one representation has been preserved in which Set is figured with Horus, united as one divinity, between the triple serpent of good. This shows that Set, and probably, therefore, his serpent emblem, was originally not considered evil. Lower Egypt was largely populated by Semitic peoples, whose national deity was their legendary ancestor Seth, and the detestation with which the Egyptians regarded Set and the serpent Aphôphis identified with him was probably the result of national enmity. Mr. Cooper points out that the serpent of good is always represented by the Egyptians as upright and the serpent of evil as crawling, this being generally the only distinction

made. The god Chnuphis, the "soul of the world," is usually figured as a Serpent (Coluber) walking upon two human legs, and curiously enough this is the form taken by the evil principle of Persian mythology, the great serpent walking on two feet. A similar inversion of ideas occurs in the religious mythology of the Naga peoples of the East. Near the ruined temples of Cambodia, as on the Buddhist Topes of India, are sculptured gigantic serpents with voluminous folds supported by human figures, as the gigantic Aphôphis is represented on the Egyptian monuments. There must have been some special reason why the great serpent was regarded so differently by various peoples, and this was probably the result of race antagonism.

It is remarkable that one of the most ancient people of whom we have any written record—the primitive inhabitants of Chaldea—not only bore the name of the traditional father of mankind, but were especially identified with the serpent. The predecessors of the *Akkad,* in Chaldea, were the Medes, or *Mad,* of Berosus, and the distinctive title of at least the later Medes was *Már,* which in Persian means "a snake." This Sir Henry Rawlinson supposes to have given rise "not only to the Persian traditions of Zohák and

his snakes, but to the Armenian traditions, also, of the dragon dynasty of Media." The Medes of Berosus belonged almost certainly to the old Scythic stock of Central Asia, to whom the Chaldeans, the Hebrews, and the Aryans have alike been affiliated by different writers. When, therefore, Mr. Fergusson says that serpent-worship characterised the old Turanian Chaldean Empire, he would seem to trace it to the old Asiatic centre. Probably to the same source must be traced the serpent tradition of the Abyssinian kings. Bryant long since asserted that that superstition originated with the Amonians or Hamites, who also would seem to have been derived from the Scythic stock. The facts brought together in the preceding pages far from exhaust the subject, but they appear to justify the following conclusions:—

First, The serpent has been viewed with awe or veneration from primeval times, and almost universally as a re-embodiment of a deceased human being, and as such there were ascribed to it the attributes of life and wisdom, and the power of healing.

Secondly, The idea of a simple spirit re-incarnation of a deceased ancestor gave rise to the notion that mankind originally sprang from a serpent, and ultimately to a legend embodying that idea.

Thirdly, This legend was connected with nature—or rather sun-worship—and the sun was, therefore, looked upon as the divine serpent—father of man and nature.

Fourthly, Serpent-worship, as a developed religious system, originated in Central Asia, the home of the great Scythic stock, from whom all the civilised races of the historical period sprang.

Fifthly, These peoples are the Adamites, and their mythical ancestor was at one time regarded as the Great Serpent, his descendants being in a special sense serpent-worshippers.

Note.—At page 88, the Malagasy idol Ramahavaly is spoken of as still existing. As a fact, however, in 1869 all the Malagasy national idols were, by order of the government, publicly burned. Many other idols and charms were at the same time destroyed by their owners.—*Madagascar and its People,* by the Rev. James Sibree, Jun., p. 481.